



## **Berlusconi: the politically incorrect politician**

### **Voice Over:**

Silvio Berlusconi is a political phenomenon.

A leader seemingly without an ideology.

To his critics, he lies somewhere between a soap opera and a Shakespearean tragedy for Italy.

### **Vox pop 1:**

He thinks his power is unlimited. He thinks he can obtain everything, with whatever tool. And that is frightening.

### **Vox pop 2:**

He is a grotesque and unfortunate character in the history of Italy.

### **Voice Over:**

But does Berlusconi offer us a glimpse of political leadership of the future.

A cruise ship crooner turned television tycoon, Berlusconi has been a brilliant media operator since his arrival on the political scene in 1994.

### **Berlusconi:**

Italian

### **John Lloyd:**

Berlusconi's media persona is quite unique I think in democratic countries.

Because what he has done much more successfully than any other leader is to merge, is to conflate his private life, his show business life and then his political persona.

Donald Sassoon:

Berlusconi notoriously makes stupid jokes, vulgar jokes, the kind of jokes that prime ministers, statesmen should not make. He does it at international gatherings. He causes scandal, but that works.

It means he is not a politician, precisely, he makes the kind of stupid jokes that we make.

### **Voice Over:**

Engulfed in sex scandals, accused of corruption and ridiculed by the international media, his ability to reach out to ordinary Italians in defiance of his growing critics has been at the heart of his survival and his popularity.

### **Donald Sassoon:**

There are just too many people in Italy who accept little bribes. You have dentists and doctors as well as plumbers who demand cash payments so that they will fiddle with taxes. Corruption is spread throughout society.

And someone who says almost: "Yeah, I am guilty as well, but everybody is guilty".

### **Berlusconi:**

Italian

### **John Lloyd**

Berlusconi will say, 'There you go, what do you expect, I'm an ordinary man just like you, I'm an Italian, Italians love love, they love food, they love relaxation, they love song – here's a song for you!

**Voice Over:**

Berlusconi appears to epitomise successful political leadership in the televisual age. But Berlusconi is not alone in his brand of 'post-modern populism'.

**Lloyd:**

His media populism is copied elsewhere. You see it in Berlusconi's great friend. Prime minister now Putin, in Russia, where Putin will display his... his strong physique for the camera.

You can also see echoes of the Berlusconi populist phenomenon in politicians as diverse as Jacob Zuma, the president of South Africa, as Sarah Palin in the United States

**Sarah Palin:**

"I love those hockey moms. You know they say the difference between a hockey mom and a pit-bull- Lipstick "

**John Lloyd:**

"So you turn on a press conference, you get jokes. They're giving you a good time and giving people a good time in politics is, of course, a popular thing to do."

Voice Over

Their style appears to be some way from the norms of liberal democracy.

**David Cameron:**

"A new politics where the national interest is more important than the party interest."

**John Lloyd:**

"The personalization and the concentration in the media upon the personal is delusory for our understanding of politics and if carried to an extreme can be rather dangerous."

**Voice Over:**

So far from being a one off then, does Berlusconi actually reflect a wider shift in the nature of political power?